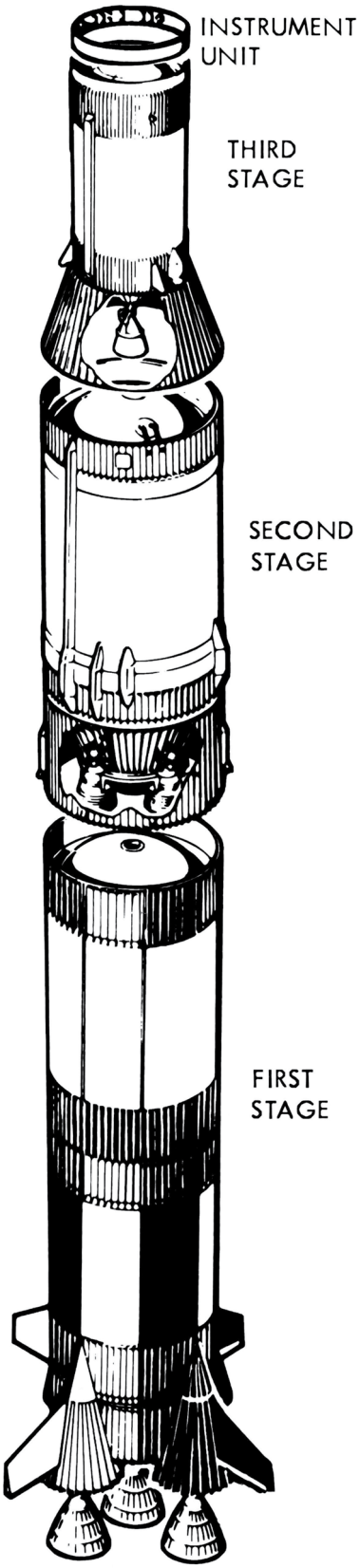
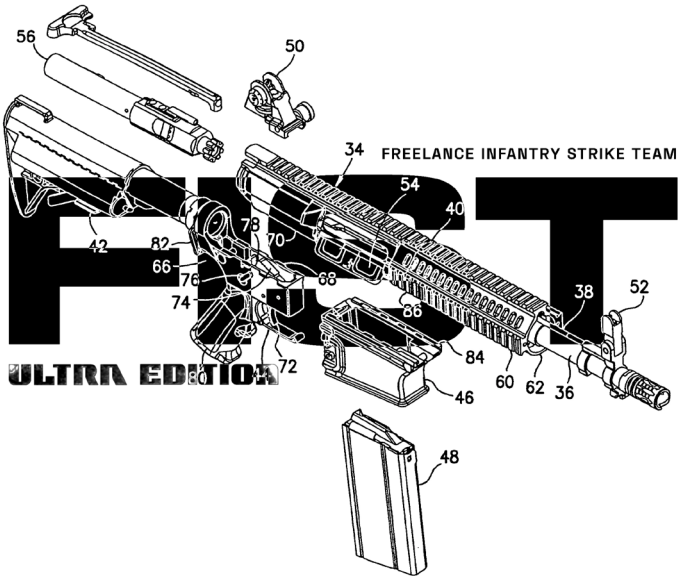
# QUICKSTART GUIDE




FREELANCE INFANTRY STRIKE TEAM

FIST

ULTRA EDITION

**WELCOME TO FIST, RECRUIT.** Contained in this Quickstart Guide is everything you need to know to deploy on your first mission. If you're running the game, the rules and references here will give you a head start without cracking open the core rulebook. Remember: as you learn the ropes, keep an open mind and always watch your buddy's back. **War is hell, and you're one of the little guys.**

# RULES SUMMARY
## PLAYERS

**Premise**
In FIST, you portray a team of paranormal mercenaries doing the jobs that no one else can (or that no one else wants) in the military-espionage ecosystem of the Cold War. You are an unconventional kind of mercenary who cares more about being true to yourself, your community, or your ideals than turning a profit, and you may have been forced into this line of work due to incompatibility with non-violent, non-paranormal society.

Gameplay involves deploying your mercenary character on missions with other players, where you will talk to people, solve problems, and engage in espionage and combat. Between missions, you may contribute facts or make choices about the direction of the game world at large. The story and reality of your FIST game exists as an ongoing conversation between the players and the referee, and it's everyone's job to treat this game world like it actually exists, then act accordingly.

**Character creation**
FIST characters begin play with the following:
- 0 FRC, TAC, CRE, and RFX attributes
- 0 ARMOR
- 0 WAR DICE
- 6 MAX HP
- Two traits (p. 39), including modifiers and item
- A role not already in use (p. 67)
- One of the following: 1D6 additional MAX HP, 1D6 WAR DICE, or a standard issue item (p. 2) like a knife, a pistol, or a serving of rations
- An appropriate codename, and a real name only the player knows

You are encouraged to reflavor traits and items. Some characters may call themselves ultrahuman—voyagers beyond the "standard" human experience—but your relationship to this term is yours to define. Note that the term may also be derogatory, othering, or misunderstood.

**Traits and roles**
Traits are snippets of special rules for individual characters which cover a unique talent, ability, or advantage, usually accompanied by a downside, boundary, or caveat if the trait's beneficial aspects are particularly powerful. Traits may offer narrative background, add new mechanics, alter pre-existing mechanics, or involve entire mini-games. Traits come pre-packaged with an item (like a weapon, tool, or piece of clothing) and a modification to your base stats (usually -2 to +2 in FRC, TAC, CRE, or RFX, but sometimes an irregular alteration to HP or ARMOR, or some unique situational modifier). Trait-granted items are always repaired, returned, or replaced between missions.

Roles define your character's narrative archetype, which they advance by playing into. Roles come with a relevant backstory prompt (usually beginning with "Describe...") and a difficult condition which must be fulfilled to advance (e.g. a pacifist cannot be violent, a wildcard must behave unpredictably).

**Playing the game**
Players and the referee take turns talking. The referee describes the scene the players are in (along with portraying people and providing background info when needed), and the players respond by describing their actions within the game world.

If an action would be risky or the outcome is otherwise uncertain, the player rolls 2D6 and adds their most relevant attribute score (FORCEFUL, TACTICAL, CREATIVE, or REFLEXIVE). Don't roll the dice if the action described is easily accomplished or totally impossible. The referee interprets the dice and narrates how the fictional situation changes, as follows (it never stays the same):
- **6- / FAILURE:** Things go wrong somehow
- **7-9 / PARTIAL:** Things go right but with a downside
- **10 / SUCCESS:** Things go right with no downside
- **DOUBLE 6s / ULTRA:** Things go right with a bonus

The referee never uses this system to roll the dice for non-player characters (but may roll the dice to determine damage, random behavior, content, and stats). Referee controlled characters simply take action, and the players are given a chance to react or respond by roleplaying and/or rolling the dice. Players can also spend one WAR DIE to add +1D6 to any type of dice roll in the game, no matter who makes it, including the referee.

**Combat and death**
Attacking someone, or dealing with being attacked, is the same as any other risky action and should be handled accordingly with a 2D6 roll. Characters deal their weapon's DAMAGE (if rolling to attack) on a success and may take DAMAGE from their target on a failure.

If the players are engaged in active combat (i.e. two or more parties actively, openly attempting to harm each other), rolling a failure always incurs DAMAGE. Using stealth, tricks, and tactical retreats to avoid active combat leads to better chances of survival. Players do not take regimented turns but should avoid hogging the spotlight with combat actions. Enemies controlled by the ref never roll to attack, but telegraph attacks for the players to respond to (e.g. "the guard aims a rifle at you," or "the vampire bares her fangs").

DAMAGE is subtracted from the victim's HP. ARMOR is subtracted from DAMAGE taken (e.g. 6 DAMAGE vs. 2 ARMOR subtracts 4 HP). Reaching 0 HP means a character has died, and players are encouraged to insert a new one as soon as the story allows. Some characters may be revived through complex science/magic.

**Items**
FIST has no money system, as FIST operatives often work for no pay and/or can't engage with financial institutions. Wealth comes in the form of capital, primarily by collecting powerful and valuable items. Characters may deal with monetary items from time to time, like "a briefcase full of cash," "a gold bar," or "a blank check."

# RULES SUMMARY
## PLAYERS/REFEREE

Baseline FIST characters can wield one weapon at a time. Holdout weapons (shivs, slingshots) are easily concealable and deal 3 DAMAGE. Light weapons (pistols, knives) deal 1D6 DAMAGE and can be concealed by the skilled. Medium weapons (rifles, swords) deal 1D6+1 DAMAGE, heavy weapons (machine guns, RPGs) deal 1D6+2 DAMAGE, and anomalous, experimental, magical, or otherwise unique weapons can deal 2D6 or more DAMAGE. Unarmed/non-weapon attacks deal the worst of 2D6 DAMAGE.

Baseline FIST characters can wear one piece of body-sized armor at a time, in addition to an unlimited amount of non-armoring clothes, and accessories that grant armor (like helmets or shields). Clothing grants 0 ARMOR, but certain outfits may have useful effects. Light armor (bulletproof vest, thick leather) grants 1 ARMOR, and heavy armor (ceramic plate, power armor) grants 2 ARMOR. Unusual or paranormal pieces may grant 3 ARMOR or more. Some wearable items (capes, helmets, small shields) are accessories, which can be voluntarily destroyed to negate DAMAGE once.

Items marked with a number of uses are unavailable when depleted, but replenish between missions; they are common and easily replaceable. Items marked consumable never return once used, and are uncommon, irreplaceable, or unique. Some items can be used indefinitely, like simple tools or trinkets. All items carry over from mission to mission, but items not granted by traits or standard issue are lost if left behind or destroyed.

**Rendezvous points**
Once per mission, the players may request a rendezvous point, and the referee will describe a nearby but difficult-to-reach safe location where the players can recuperate. At the rendezvous point, each player may choose one: REST (heal 1D6 HP), RESTOCK (replenish one item or resource), or INTEL (one useful fact about the mission).

**Character advancement**
Characters advance once a mission is complete if they acted according to their role. The referee, alone or with the players, decides when missions are complete (usually, but not always, upon completion of the original objective), and if role criteria has been met.

Upon advancing, characters can choose one reward: a new trait, +1D6 MAX HP, or +1D6 WAR DICE. Some traits may introduce alternative rewards for advancing, or change the criteria for being allowed to advance.

**Running the game**
As the referee, you are the game's host and facilitator. You are fair and impartial, and your main job is to ensure that everything makes sense, and that everyone has fun. You portray the world beyond the player characters, like their surroundings, their enemies and allies, and the geo-political goings-on behind the scenes.

**Making missions**
Don't plan a mission beat-by-beat, set up situations with moving parts for the players to interact with. Prepare in broad strokes; use shorthand notes to remember key information and leave the rest up to chance. Missions should have these components:

- **OBJECTIVE:** One clear thing that needs to be done to complete the mission, established beforehand; also secondary, optional objectives if desired
- **REWARD:** A valuable item or fortunate event, literally given as a reward or physically attainable on-site
- **CONSEQUENCE**: Something major that will happen and affect the PCs and/or the world if a) the mission is failed, or b) if it is ignored when choosing between multiple missions.

**Enemies and NPCs**
Enemies and NPCs (non-player characters) should have clear motivations and behave in realistic ways (including unpredictable behavior). "Enemy" and "NPC" are labels that can be switched between based on context. Some enemies and NPCs should have small special mechanics, like rolling to see if they lose their nerve, or a special ability that changes combat scenes they partake in. These are the loose guidelines for their stats:

- **1. EASY,** e.g. civilians, animals, federal agents:
  3 HP, 0 ARMOR, 3 DAMAGE
- **2. MEDIUM,** e.g. soldiers, cops, security guards:
  3 HP, 1 ARMOR, 1D6 DAMAGE
- **3. HARD**, e.g. combat androids, elite soldiers:
  6 HP, 1 ARMOR, 1D6+1 DAMAGE
- **4. EXTREME,** e.g. evil spirits, alien monsters:
  9 HP, 2 ARMOR, 1D6+2 DAMAGE
- **5. IMPOSSIBLE,** e.g. cyborg agents, demigods:
  12 HP, 2 ARMOR, 2D6 DAMAGE
- **6. NIGHTMARE,** e.g. mutant hulks, arch-demons:
  18 HP, 3 ARMOR, 3D6 DAMAGE

**CYCLOPS**
FIST is set during a version of the twentieth century where sci-fi, fantasy, and horror concepts are real, commonplace, and a natural part of the world; however, this "other world" of the strange and impossible is largely kept unknown, suppressed, or falsely debunked.

The world is secretly overseen by CYCLOPS, a sprawling, totalitarian intelligence agency and apparatus of control which will stop at nothing to preserve the status quo. Exploring any mission with a supernatural or conspiracy element can attract unwanted CYCLOPS attention. You might think of CYCLOPS as a Sisyphean force of Law, and FIST as Promethean agents of Chaos.

CYCLOPS has their own paramilitary teams with special powers equivalent to or more powerful than those of FIST operatives. This branch is called CYCLOPS Recon Operations, or the CROs for short. CRO Teams (or individual CROs) may be dropped into a mission as evil counterparts to FIST, pursuing opposing objectives.

**What's an RPG?**
An RPG ("rocket-propelled grenade") is a shoulder-fired weapon that launches explosive warheads—but that's not important right now. You're probably wondering what a roleplaying game is, and we've got an answer: it's a game played with paper, pencils, dice, and imagination, where you and your friends tell a collaborative story in an exciting fantasy world. It's also an exercise in strategy and problem solving, because that world is alive, and it won't always respond how you want or expect it to.

There's no such thing as being too green to play an RPG. The book might seem intimidating, but it's mostly toys, advice, and pictures. All you're really going to do is play make-believe about spies, robots, aliens, and the like.

If you're familiar with BDSM/kink play, improv theater, or divination, you already understand the structure at play: a group of people establish a scenario and its characters in their shared mind's eye, then they play the scenario out using hard rules, interpretive rules, and a facilitator. In doing so, a story is told through the application and manipulation of symbols and archetypes. Ideally, the experience is creative, therapeutic, and fun for all parties.

If you play video games, it's like that, but it's happening in your head. If you like TV shows, imagine acting one out as you write it. If you've just crawled out of a cloning tank yesterday and have no prior experiences, we recommend setting this document down and looking for an exit, because you've got bigger fish to fry.

**How does FIST compare to other RPGs?**
FIST is a **rules-lite** game, which means that there aren't a lot of complex, fiddly rules to remember, and the ones that do exist are made to be bent and broken. It's also a **lethal** game—you portray soldiers who can die from a bullet to the head, not powerful knights and wizards or chromed-up cyber-samurai. Finally, FIST is **unfair**. The referee is encouraged to introduce threatening enemies and seemingly solutionless puzzles, and the players are expected to lie, cheat, and steal their way to victory.

**How can I get started?**
Try making a merc! You can use the rules and reference key in this guide to explore the world of FIST and make someone you think is cool. FIST's lore is a suggestion, not gospel, so go hogwild explaining how your character came to be. Just don't get too attached—if they're unlucky or reckless, they'll come home in a bodybag.

If you're the ref, try reading the refereeing advice in the core rulebook (p. 15), or dive into the **Intelligence Matrix** (p. 70) and start cooking up some intel about the world.

**What's a good mission to start with?**
If you want a straight-up example of what FIST is like, try **THE OUAGADOUGOU JOB** (core rulebook, p. 31). If you're looking for a real action movie challenge, use **ATARAXIA** (the red RATIONS pamphlet). If you'd like to learn to play through trial and error, hop into **HAZARD FUNCTION** (the orange RATIONS pamphlet). Zero time to prep? Open the **mission generator** (p. 75) and make it up as you go!

# REFERENCE KEY

## STANDARD ISSUE ITEMS

1. Balaclava (hides identity)
2. Flashlight (can be used as a weapon attachment)
3. Knife (1D6 DAMAGE)
4. MRE field rations (+1D6 HP, one use)
5. Pistol (1D6 DAMAGE)
6. Riot shield (1 ARMOR, equip as weapon)

## EMERGENCY INSERTION

If your character dies, create a fresh character while play continues. When you're ready to deploy, jump into the fray and roll 2D6:

- **6 OR LESS:** Deployment goes wrong somehow.
- **7-9:** Deploy normally.
- **10 OR ABOVE:** Deploy with an extra standard issue item.
- **DOUBLE SIXES:** As above, and +3 to your first roll.

## ROLES (p. 67)

**11.** ABANDONED
**12.** AMNESIAC
**13.** AVENGER
**14.** CHESSMASTER
**15.** CLEANUP
**16.** CRUSADER
**21.** CULTIST
**22.** DEALMAKER
**23.** DIPLOMAT
**24.** ENEMY
**25.** FIREBRAND
**26.** FLUX
**31.** FUGITIVE
**32.** GLADIATOR
**33.** HEALER
**34.** ICON
**35.** MASK
**36.** MAVERICK
**41.** MERCENARY
**42.** MUDDLER
**43.** NIHILIST
**44.** PARTISAN
**45.** PEACEMAKER
**46.** PUNK
**51.** PROVIDER
**52.** REPENTANT
**53.** REPRESENTATIVE
**54.** RETURN
**55.** RETIRED
**56.** ROOKIE
**61.** SCHOLAR
**62.** SKEPTIC
**63.** UNKNOWN
**64.** WANDERER
**65.** WILDCARD
**66.** WRETCH

## TRAITS (p. 39)

**111.** ACCOUNTANT
**112.** ACE
**113.** ACHILLES
**114.** AIMBOT
**115.** AKIMBO
**116.** AMATEUR
**121.** ANALYST
**122.** ANIMUS
**123.** AQUATIC
**124.** ARMORED
**125.** ARTIST
**126.** ASSASSINATION
**131.** ASTRONAUT
**132.** ATMOKINESIS
**133.** AURA
**134.** BERSERKER
**135.** BOMBER
**136.** BOTTLENECK
**141.** BOUNCE
**142.** BREAKDOWN
**143.** BUDDY
**144.** BUILDER
**145.** BUM
**146.** CAMOUFLAGE
**151.** CANNIBAL
**152.** CENTIPEDE
**153.** CHAMPION
**154.** CHARM
**155.** CHEF
**156.** CHEMIST
**161.** CLASSY
**162.** CLIMBER
**163.** COMMANDO
**164.** CONCEAL
**165.** CONTORTIONIST
**166.** CRUEL
**211.** CUT
**212.** CYBORG
**213.** DEBATEUR
**214.** DEFUSE
**215.** DETECTIVE
**216.** DETONATOR
**221.** DIRECTOR
**222.** DIRTY
**223.** DISGUISE
**224.** DOORS
**225.** DRUID
**226.** DUELIST
**231.** ECHO
**232.** EMPATHY
**233.** EXPERT
**234.** FASHIONABLE
**235.** FATALITY
**236.** FATE
**241.** FIELD
**242.** FIEND
**243.** FIGHTER
**244.** FIREFIGHTER
**245.** FLIGHT
**246.** FLOW
**251.** FLURRY
**252.** FOCUS
**253.** FORAGE
**254.** FREEZE
**255.** GADGETS
**256.** GANGSTER
**261.** GENIUS
**262.** GOONS
**263.** GROUND
**264.** GROW
**265.** HACKER
**266.** HAPPY
**311.** HARVEST
**312.** HATE
**313.** HAZARD
**314.** HEADSPACE
**315.** HEAVYWEIGHT
**316.** HENSHIN
**321.** HEX
**322.** HIGHLANDER
**323.** HIJACK
**324.** HOLY
**325.** HUNTER
**326.** HYBRID
**331.** HYPNOSIS
**332.** ICEBREAKER
**333.** ILLUSION
**334.** IMPROVISE
**335.** INJECTION
**336.** INSURANCE
**341.** INTERROGATION
**342.** JANITOR
**343.** JINX
**344.** JOKER
**345.** KNIGHT
**346.** LIMBS
**351.** LIMIT
**352.** LINK
**353.** LISTEN
**354.** LOVER
**355.** LUSH
**356.** LYCANTHROPE
**361.** MASCOT
**362.** MECHANIC
**363.** MEDIC
**364.** MERCY
**365.** MIMIC
**366.** MINDREADER
**411.** MOBILITY
**412.** MOMENTUM
**413.** MONOLOGUE
**414.** MONSTERS
**415.** MORBID
**416.** MURDER
**421.** MUTANT
**422.** NEUROMANCER
**423.** NINJA
**424.** NOIR
**425.** NUMBERS
**426.** OBJECTS
**431.** OOZE
**432.** PAINLESS
**433.** PARKOUR
**434.** PATHETIC
**435.** PET
**436.** PHONE
**441.** PIRATE
**442.** POCKET
**443.** POLYGOT
**444.** PRECOGNITION
**445.** PREPPER
**446.** PROJECTION
**451.** PROSTHETIC
**452.** PSYCHOMETRY
**453.** PUNCTUAL
**454.** PUPPETMASTER
**455.** PYROMANIAC
**456.** QUANTUM
**461.** QUILLS
**462.** RADIOACTIVE
**463.** RAGE
**464.** RECRUIT
**465.** RELOAD
**466.** RETREAT
**511.** RIVAL
**512.** ROBOT
**513.** RUNNER
**514.** SAWBONES
**515.** SCAVENGER
**516.** SCOUT
**521.** SEAL
**522.** SECURITY
**523.** SEDUCE
**524.** SEER
**525.** SEXY
**526.** SHARPSHOOTER
**531.** SHIELD
**532.** SHOW
**533.** SHRINK
**534.** SKELETON
**535.** SLACKER
**536.** SLEEPER
**541.** SLOWMO
**542.** SMASH
**543.** SMITH
**544.** SMOKER
**545.** SNATCHER
**546.** SNEAK
**551.** SNIPER
**552.** SOAK
**553.** SOCIAL
**554.** SPY
**555.** STAND
**556.** STATIC
**561.** STATUESQUE
**562.** STICKY
**563.** STONER
**564.** STRETCH
**565.** STUBBORN
**566.** SUMMONER
**611.** SUNDER
**612.** SUPPLY
**613.** SURVEILLANCE
**614.** SYMBIOTE
**615.** SYNTHETIC
**616.** TACTICIAN
**621.** TEACHER
**622.** TECHNIQUE
**623.** TELEKINETIC
**624.** TELEPORT
**625.** THEATRICS
**626.** THIEF
**631.** THRALL
**632.** TRAPS
**633.** TRIPPER
**634.** TRUTH
**635.** TURNCOAT
**636.** TURRET
**641.** UNARMED
**642.** UNDEAD
**643.** UNFEELING
**644.** VAMPIRE
**645.** VEHICLE
**646.** VENOMOUS
**651.** VETERAN
**652.** VOLATILE
**653.** WALLBANG
**654.** WEAPONMASTER
**655.** WEB
**656.** WEIGHTLIFTER
**661.** WHISPERER
**662.** WINNER
**663.** WITCH
**664.** WITTY
**665.** WIZARD
**666.** XENO